

CHERRYDALE VOLUNTEER FIRE HOUSE  
3900 Lee Highway  
Arlington  
Virginia

HABS VA-1428  
VA-1428

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### CHERRYDALE VOLUNTEER FIRE HOUSE

HABS No. VA-1428

Location: 3900 Lee Highway, in the Cherrydale neighborhood of Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia.

UTM coordinates: 18 E: 317225/ N: 4306165.

Description: The front façade of the three bay by six bay, two and one-half story structure faces Lee Highway, giving it a prominent position along a busy county thoroughfare. The building is clad in a brick veneer and capped by a hipped roof that is covered with asphalt shingles. Two chimneys project above the ridgeline. The overhanging eaves and exposed rafters further augment the building's architectural character as does the Colonial Revival-style detailing that grace the building with elements like the gabled dormers, beltcourses, and jackarches. The Colonial Revival influence is also seen in the choice of construction material such as the brick. A granite cornerstone, at the building's northeast corner, memorializes the commencement of construction with "C.V.F.D. A.D. 1919" and another granite marker, placed between the first and second stories, identifies the occupants with the inscription: "VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT."

The fire truck is housed in a garage on the northeast side of the firehouse; the second floor of the building contains a kitchen, community hall, and restrooms. Sleeping quarters are currently on the first floor.<sup>1</sup>

History: The Cherrydale Volunteer Fire House was the first such structure to be erected in Arlington County, and houses the county's first (formally organized) fire department. Although the fire department began as early as 1898, it wasn't until 1904 that it was officially established. The need for a permanent firehouse was recognized shortly thereafter and in the 1910s community fund-raisers were dedicated to the cause. The building was built in 1919 and operational by 1921.

Built to serve the Cherrydale community, the firehouse has been an integral part of that neighborhood for much of the twentieth century. Its siting on Lee Highway makes the firehouse a key visual landmark among the low-scale commercial structures and against a domestic architectural backdrop consisting primarily of historic bungalows. Although its surroundings have changed, encroached on by denser commercial zoning and mixed-use development projects with higher silhouettes, the firehouse continues to operate as a fire station.<sup>2</sup> Other uses of the

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Register nomination includes a sketch floor plan.

<sup>2</sup> In 1989 there was a movement to relocate the Cherrydale firehouse (then known as fire station no. 3) due to concerns about its age, size, and design. Proponents of the relocation argued the firehouse offered inadequate space for training, modern equipment, and living space, among other grievances. Nonetheless the firehouse remained in

CHERRYDALE VOLUNTEER FIRE HOUSE

HABS No. VA-1428

(page 2)

building by, or for, the neighborhood have disappeared over time;<sup>3</sup> for example, the firehouse no longer hosts bingo nights or raffles (outlawed with other games of chance in 1932), or a shop in the northwest corner.

Sources: Laura V. Trieschmann and Laura Harris Hughes, "Cherrydale Volunteer Fire House," Nomination 2007, National Register for Historic Places, National Park Service.

---

use, and in 1997 the exterior lighting was replaced, a historic marker added in 2001, and new windows in 2002. Building permits indicate changes to the building fabric were made as early as 1935 when "repairs" and "re-roofing" occurred. The front door was altered in 1949; four dormers added to the roof in the 1950s; a telephone booth in 1956; interior changes in 1962 (wall put back in a decade later – in 1978); fenestration changed in the rear and re-roofing in the 1970s; and finally, changes to the entrance in 1981. Records of the Arlington County Building Department, Building Permits, Virginia Room, Arlington County Public Library (microfilm)/ "House Numbers and Street Names" Cards, on file, Arlington County Historic Preservation Division.

<sup>3</sup> Sally Berk, "Washington, D.C.'s Pre-World War II Firehouses," Summary report, n.d., 1, as cited in the Nomination.

ADDENDUM TO:  
CHERRYDALE VOLUNTEER FIRE HOUSE  
3900 Lee Highway  
Arlington  
Virginia

HABS VA-1428  
VA-1428

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001